

Ershad firm on removing AL govt thru' mass movement

GOLAPGANJ (Sylhet), Feb 16: Jatiya Party chief and former President Hussain Muhammad Ershad has reiterated his call for the removal of what he termed as 'incompetent and inept government' through a strong mass movement, reports AFP.

"We will shed the last drop of our blood, if need be, to establish the rights of the common man," he said while addressing a rally at the local high school ground.

He said those who are out to smear the Islamic values and undermine the country's sovereignty, have no right to stay in power.

Presided over by Osman Harun Chowdhury, chairman of the Golapganj upazila unit of the Jatiya Party, the meeting was addressed, among others, by former prime minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed, joint secretary general of Jatiya Party Ismail Hossain Bengal, political advisor to the party chief Barrister A Hasib and organising secretary Nasiruddin Chowdhury, MP.

Later in the afternoon, the JP chief also addressed another public meeting at the Zakiganj upazila sadar.

At the Zakiganj public meeting, Ershad accused the ruling party of belittling the image of the luminous son of the soil, the late Commander-in-Chief of War of Independence, General M A G Osmany.

He regretted the birth and death anniversaries of the valiant freedom fighter were no longer observed with due honour.

"I had committed a mistake by extending my party's support to this government," he said. "I had committed a mistake by extending support to an oppressive government," he regretted.

Meet on martyrdom of Dr Shamsuzzoha tomorrow

The 30th anniversary of martyrdom of pioneering figure of 1969 mass upsurge Dr Shamsuzzoha will be commemorated tomorrow at 5 pm at the Planning and Development Academy auditorium at Nilkhet, reports BSS.

Post and Telecommunications, Housing and Public Works Minister Mohammad Nasim, State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed, State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Prof Zinnatunnesa Talukder, former VC of Rajshahi University Prof Mazharul Islam, former VC of Jahangirnagar University Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, Prof Mostafa Nurul Islam will participate in the commemorative meeting which will be presided over by Rajshahi University Old Students' Association president Matru Rahman Bhachu.

Cotton shop gutted in city

By Staff Correspondent

A cotton shop was gutted in a fire at Kamrunnagar, Postagola, in the city yesterday.

The fire broke out at Samad Traders at about 11:40 am. The loss caused by the fire was estimated at about Tk one lakh, according to Fire Brigade sources.

Two fire fighting units from Postagola station rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control after nearly one hour. According to the fire brigade sources, the fire originated from an electrical short circuit.

NDC team visits PIB

A 22-member National Defence College (NDC) delegation led by Brigadier Ikramul Huq yesterday visited Bangladesh Press Institute (PIB), reports BSS.

The delegation exchanged views with the PIB officials. They discussed different media related issues including PIB's role and activities, media's role in social discourse and relation between the press and government.

Director General of PIB Dr Sheikh Abdus Salam and Editor of The Financial Express Moazzem Hossain answered different news related questions of the delegation. They visited the PIB library after the meeting. Professor Salam presented a crest to the visiting members of NDC on behalf of the institute, said a press release.

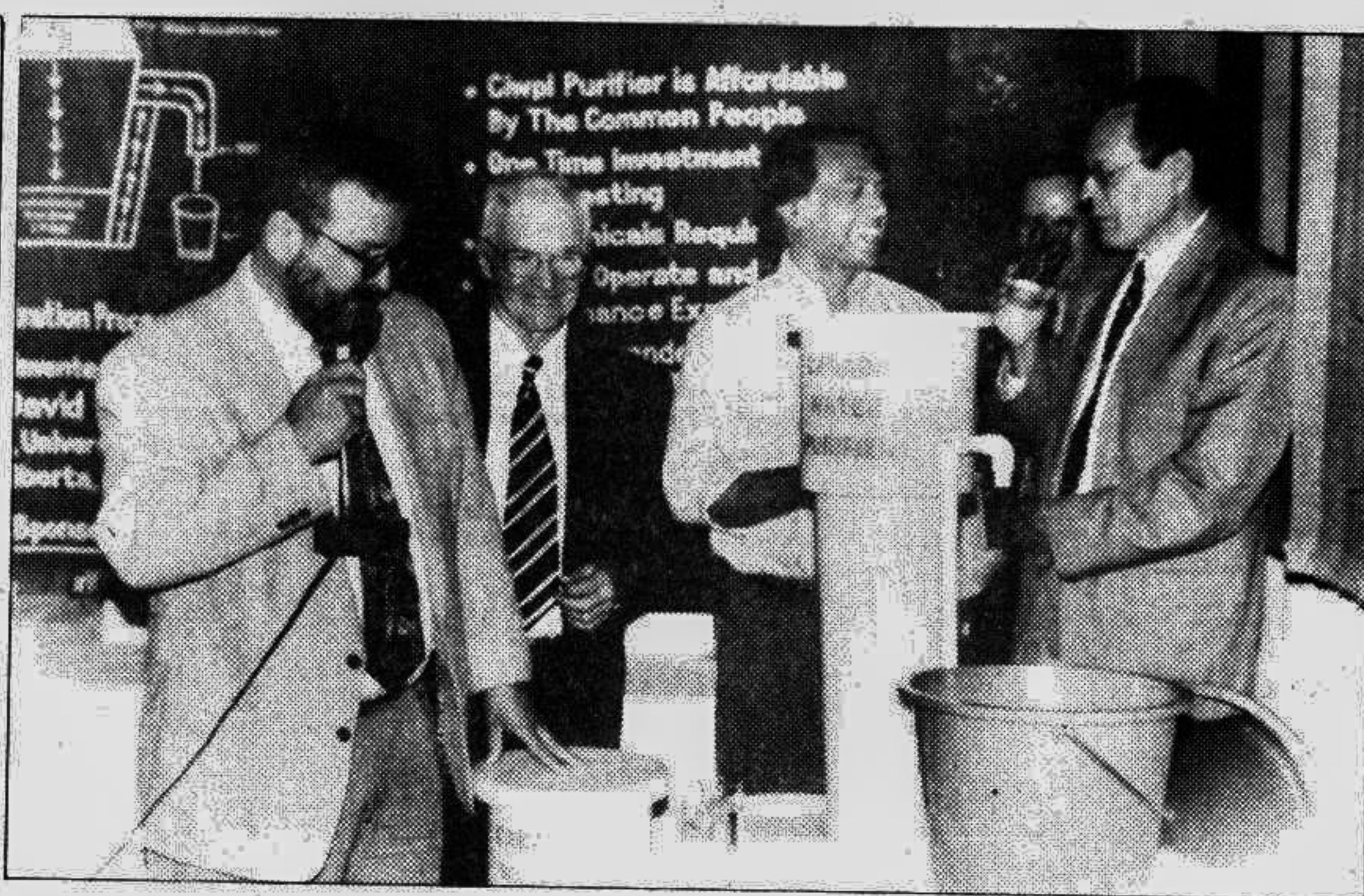
Man caught with fake Tk 500 notes in Laxmipur

LAXMIPUR, Feb 16: Police arrested a man and recovered two forged notes of Taka 500 denomination from him at Sonali Bank road of Raipur Bazar here on Sunday, reports UNB.

According to the police, Abdul Munaf, 50, gave a Tk 500 note to a shopkeeper while buying fried rice. Suspecting the note as forged, the shopkeeper raised hue and cry.

People nearby caught Munaf and handed him over to the police.

Police also recovered another forged note of Taka 500 from his possession. Munaf was sent to jail after the court rejected his bail prayer.



Dr David Manz, the developer of the 'Canada Water Purifier', displaying the filter to newsmen in the city yesterday. Bill Richards, chairman of Canadian International Water Purification Ltd, Dr Kazi Faruque Ahmed, Chairman of Proshika, and Nicholas Etheridge, Canadian High Commissioner, are also seen in the picture. — Star photo

Reception to Dr Garst

Renowned American orthopedic surgeon Dr Ronald J Garst will be accorded a civic reception at the Shahid Suhrawardy Hospital premises in the city on Friday, at 4:30 pm, reports UNB.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Salah Uddin Yusuf will be present as chief guest while Political Advisor to the Prime Minister Dr SA Malek will be special guest at the function, said an official handout.

Later, Dr Garst will inaugurate a new casualty ward at the hospital.

Dr Garst first came to Bangladesh after the Liberation War to treat the wounded freedom fighters. During his stay here, he established an orthopedic hospital, which is now known as Panqui Hospital.

BRDB to repair 69 deep tubewells

FARIDPUR, Feb 16: Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) has taken up an elaborate plan to increase irrigation facilities in greater Faridpur district by repairing 69 deep tubewells in 1998-99 and 1999-2000 financial years, reports BSS.

According to an official source, the tubewells would be repaired at an estimated cost of Taka 35 lakh 30 thousand.

Low-cost water purifiers launched in city

By Special Correspondent

A Canadian company and Proshika, a local NGO, has launched a joint-venture project to produce and market 50,000 low-cost water purifiers for domestic use in rural and urban areas to help people access to safe drinking water.

Designed to reduce dependency on tubewell water, a major source of arsenic contamination in Bangladesh, the simple plastic container-based filter using 150-year-old technology has been devised by a Canadian scientist with assistance from Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) providing 100,000 dollars.

The purifier is expected to be sold at a price between Tk 600 and Tk 1,000 per unit under the brand name of 'Canadian Water Purifier'. Chairman of the Canadian International Water Purification Ltd, told a press conference in the city yesterday.

The company plans to produce one million units from 18 plants located in different parts of Bangladesh. Dr Kazi Faruque Ahmed, Chairman of Proshika,

said. The idea is to reduce dependency on groundwater and promote use of surface water for drinking purposes at a cheaper cost. If required, the poor would be provided with soft-term credits to buy it, the Proshika chief said.

Dr David Manz, who developed the purifier, told the journalists that his device had been tested in 20 countries from Nicaragua to Vietnam. The device that destroys different water-borne bacteria has also been found removing arsenic from water significantly 50 to 70 per cent when water samples from Chapalnawabganj, a worst arsenic-affected area, were tested in Canada.

The device uses simple sand filters which can be used for a life-time, he said, adding that only washing the sand layer is required from time to time.

Nicholas Etheridge, Canadian High Commissioner in Bangladesh, said that CIDA had provided 100,000 dollars in grant to develop the device and for testing water samples from Bangladesh. He hoped that it would help the country better access to safe water.

Prof Abu Sayeed Khan elected JUTA president

By JU Correspondent

The combined panel backed by pro-AL and pro-BNP teachers bagged 11 posts out of the 15 posts in the Jahangirnagar University Teachers' Association (JUTA) election yesterday.

The 11 posts bagged by the Liberal Progressive Panel (LPP) include vice president, treasurer, general secretary, and joint secretary. The other pro-BNP panel, Jatiyatabadi Gano-tantrik Shikkhak Parishad (JGSP) won the posts of president and three other members.

Prof Abu Sayeed Khan was elected president and Prof Amin Mohammad Ali, Dr Mohammad Rafiquzzaman and Mojibar Rahman were elected members from the JGSP panel.

The winners from LPP panel are Prof Nurul Alam — vice president, Farid Ahmed — joint secretary, and Prof Khondakar Mustahidur Rahman, Dr Abdul Chowdhury, Prof Abu Hossain, Prof Ali Akond, Prof Enamul Haq Khan, Lecturer Naimul Islam and Dr Sadia Ahmed — members.

LPP candidates for general secretary and treasurer Dr Syed Quamrul Ahsan and Prof Nurul Alam Khan respectively were earlier elected unopposed as there was no contenders for the positions.

A total of 244 teachers cast votes, but three votes were cancelled. The election was conducted by Prof Muniruzzaman and held at the university club from 9 am to 1 pm.

Of the 15 elected, five are known as pro-AL and rest 10 as pro-BNP teachers.

Ctg Metropolitan Sessions Judge Court opens

CHITTAGONG, Feb 16: Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Abdul Matin Khasru today called upon all concerned to cooperate with the government for reforming the judicial system and speedy disposal of cases to ensure justice to all and sundry, reports BSS.

Speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural function of the Chittagong Metropolitan Sessions Judge Court on the court building premises here, the minister said that what was going on under ten projects for reforming old and obsolete laws and speedy disposal of cases.

"I want your cooperation to reform laws, make the laws more effective and ensure justice to the people," he added.

The function presided over by Chittagong District and Sessions Judge Abdus Salam, was also addressed by the Secretary of the Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Amin Ullah. Judge of the Chittagong Metropolitan Sessions Court Afzal Hussain Ahmad and Chittagong District Bar Association president Nurul Safa Talukder, Chittagong City Corporation Mayor A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury was also present.

Khasru pointed out that if judges, investigating officers, witnesses, lawyers and others concerned worked sincerely, cases would not pile up in the courts.

8 get life-term for killing in Chandpur

CHANDPUR, Feb 16: Additional District Judge AKM Salimullah in a verdict on Monday sentenced eight persons to imprisonment for life on charges of killing a 60-year old man named Jalaluddin Bokaul, reports APB.

According to details of the case, Jalaluddin, accompanied by his son Rafiqul Islam, 36, and some other persons were returning home at Rajarajganj under Hajiganj thana on September 15, 1992 from Chandpur town.

The eight accused had swooped on Jalaluddin and seriously injured him by hitting with bottles.

The gang again attacked him on the following day while the victim was being removed to Hajiganj Hospital. Police, who later received the information, helped Jalaluddin to get admitted to the hospital where he succumbed to his injuries on September 19.

Jalal made a statement to police before his death at the hospital and later, his son Rafiq filed a case with Hajiganj police.

Police hauled up 13 persons and framed charges against them, of whom eight were given life sentences and a fine of Tk 5,000 each and suffer another six months RI in default.

CJA,B condole Motahar's death

Commonwealth Journalists' Association, Bangladesh (CJA,B) has condoned the death of veteran journalist Motahar Hossain Siddiqui, reports UNB.

In a condolence message yesterday CJA,B president Hassan Shaharior and secretary general Farid Hossain recalled his contribution to the development of fair journalism in Bangladesh.

They conveyed sympathy to the bereaved members of his family and prayed for his departed soul.

Death anniversary observed

The 25th death anniversary of Enayet Karim, the first Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh, was observed yesterday. Guran khwani was held and special prayers were offered for eternal peace of the departed soul.



Geoffrey Fairhurst, Head of the Immigration Section of the British High Commission in Dhaka (3rd from left), exchanging views with a group of journalists about United Kingdom's general visa policy, procedures in obtaining UK visa and future plans at the British High Commission on Sunday. The Immigration officials of the High Commission revealed that 77.48 per cent of a total of 17,192 applicants were granted UK visa in 1998. The success rate was 73.78 per cent against 18,132 visa applicants in 1997. Later, the journalists visited the facilities at the Visa Section at the British High Commission.

Bangladesh getting due share of Ganges water: Razzak

Bangladesh is getting its due share of the Ganges water as guaranteed in the Ganges Water Treaty with India, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, reports UNB.

Today's report from a team of the Joint Rivers Commission which visited Farakka point Monday shows that Bangladesh is getting its due share," he said replying to a supplementary question from Fazlur Rahman Patel of BNP.

Expressing the hope that Bangladesh would get its due share of Ganges water even after the 30 years' tenure of the present treaty, the water resources minister said: "Bangladesh is getting its due share and would get it even after the expiry of the treaty as it guarantees 90 per cent of water available at the Farakka point."

However, he agreed that there is shortage of water at the Ganges and underscored the need for augmentation.

"We are in discussion with India and Nepal regarding augmentation of Ganges waters on the basis of sub-regional cooperation to make up for the scarcity."

Replying to Moshiur Rahman of BNP, the minister said Bangladesh was getting more

water than stipulated in the treaty during the current season. "We got more than it was guaranteed in the treaty during the whole month of February."

Replying to Shamsuzzaman Duda of BNP, Abdur Razzak said flow of the Ganges at Hardinge Bridge was normal during January 1-15 this year.

He said the flow at Hardinge Bridge was recorded between 96272 and 85186 cusec during this period.

The water minister said Bangladesh received on average 95934 cusec water in the first ten days of January against the country's due share of 67516 cusec as laid down in the water-sharing accord.

In reply to a supplementary question, Razzak said the government had decided to increase navigability by dredging major rivers and digging canals under the food-for-work programme.

He said the required wheat could not be managed for a canal-digging scheme as substantial portion of wheat was allocated for post-flood rehabilitation programme.

Razzak, however, hoped that the canal-digging drive would be started in full swing next year if there are no floods.

SAPRI syndicate on social sector today

The third syndicate on 'Consequences of Fiscal Restructuring on Social Development of Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI)' will be held today at 10 am at the seminar room of the LGED Bhaban in the city, says a press release.

Political Adviser to the Prime Minister Dr S A Malek will attend the day-long session as chief guest, while Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Samik Federation president Manjurul Ahsan Khan will preside.

The session will also be addressed by Prof Rahman Sobhan, Covenor, SAPRI Bangladesh Steering Committee, Dr Kazi Faruque Ahmed, President, Proshika — the lead organisation of SAPRI, Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, Co-convenor of SAPRI Steering Committee, Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Study Director of SAPRI Research Team, and the World Bank Country Director, Frederick Temple.

About 140 representatives from the government, NGOs, civil society and the World Bank, who take interest directly and indirectly in the policy issues of the health and education sectors, will take part in the session.



Surbani Sangskritik Goshthi rendering songs at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday as part of Ekushey programmes organised by Sammito Sangskritik Jote. — Star photo

Arsenic-related diseases on the rise in Jessore

JESSORE, Feb 16: There are reports of arsenic contamination from almost every part of the country, but the extent of the water pollution due to this in a village in Sharsha thana here is acute, reports UNB.

Almost 80 per cent of the total population in Samata village of the thana have been affected by various arsenic related diseases during the last few years.

Local people said at least 20 people of the village died due to the diseases during the period.

With the failure of the authorities to take any effective measure in controlling the spread of arsenic contamination and saving the people from its exposure, more and more people are becoming victims.

Villagers said that besides the death toll, the conditions of 33 people were serious due to the same reason and they had been waiting for the tragic end of

their life.

They said various teams of experts from home and abroad have been visiting their localities, but they are busy only collecting data and sample and taking interviews of the victims. No measure was there to effectively help the people about how could they save themselves from this problem, they complained.

Arsenic leads to pigmentation of human skin, anemia, respiratory disorders, abdomen pain and hepatitis after heavy exposure over the years, said the experts.

They said the worst affected areas in the country are Jessore, Kushtia, Chuadanga, Meherpur, Bagerhat and Khulna districts. People in the areas preferred to use water from the deep tube wells as the water from this source was less contaminated, they added.

Inter-ministerial meet held

A high level inter-ministerial meeting at the Home Ministry yesterday adopted draft programme schedules for Independence Day celebrations and decided that all necessary preparations would be taken to observe the day with due solemnity and fervour, an official release said, reports BSS.

The meeting, chaired by Home Minister Rafiqul Islam, opined that some necessary rescheduling in the forthcoming Independence Day celebration programmes would be necessary as the holy Eid-ul-Azha may coincide with the day, the release said.

Home Secretary Shafiur Rahman, Religious Affairs Secretary M. Morshed Khan, Cultural Affairs Secretary Dr S Jaman Majumder, Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division (AFD) Major General Imam Uz Zaman, Inspector General of Police and other concerned officials attended the meeting.

Int'l confce on practice of Bengali arts begins

RAJSHAHI, Feb 16: The 5-day long third international conference on the 'Practice of Bengali Arts' began in the Rajshahi University here today, reports APB.

The Institute of Bangladesh Studies (IBS) of Rajshahi University and the International Centre for Study of Bengali Art (ICSBA) in Dhaka have jointly organised the meet.

Former chief justice and chief adviser of caretaker government Muhammad Habibur Rahman opened the international conference at the Senate Building of Rajshahi University at 9 am.

The Vice Chancellor of Rajshahi University, Prof Abdul Khaleque, presided over the opening ceremony of the meet while the welcome addresses were delivered by IBS Director Prof Atul Hai Shibli and ICSBA Chairman Prof Enamul Haque.

Prof B N Mukherjee, Padmasri, the Carmichael Professor of Ancient Indian History and Culture of the Calcutta University, presented the keynote paper of the 'Issues in the Art of Bengal.'

Women entrepreneurship dev project launched

The government has taken up a project worth over Taka 19 crore for empowerment and economic emancipation of women, reports BSS.

The five-year project, at a cost of Taka 19 crore 3 lakh 46 thousand, to be implemented with the assistance of the UNDP, will identify seven thousand women for entrepreneurship in trade, commerce, industry and marketing throughout the country.

LGRO and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman said the government has started the second phase of implementing the city-based women development project at a cost of Taka nine crore for creating self-employment opportunities. He said another development programme at a cost Taka six crore 75 lakh is also under implementation for the poor and distressed rural women.

Prof Zinnatunnesa Talukdar urged all to contribute to the development of women of the country.

Prof Dr Tahmina Hossain said the government has taken up 36 women development projects under the current five year plan.

Organised by Jatiya Mohila Sangstha, the implementing agency of the project, the function was also addressed by Deputy Minister for Women and Children Affairs Prof Zinnatunnesa, Secretary in-charge of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs Prof Dr Tahmina Hossain and Executive Director of Jatiya Mohila Sangstha Masuda Binte Quadir. Chairperson of the Sangstha Ily Rahman presided. Zillur Rahman said the government has started the second phase of implementing the city-based women development project at a cost of Taka nine crore for creating self-employment opportunities. He said another development programme at a cost Taka six crore 75 lakh is also under implementation for the poor and distressed rural women.

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BFUJ brought out a procession in the city yesterday protesting the attack on newsmen and newspaper offices during hartal hours. — Star photo